# **FOREWORD**

This 1996 edition of the Digest of Education Statistics is the 32nd in a series of publications initiated in 1962. (The Digest has been issued annually except for combined editions for the years 1977-78, 1983-84, and 1985-86.) Its primary purpose is to provide a compilation of statistical information covering the broad field of American education from kindergarten through graduate school. The Digest includes a selection of data from many sources, both government and private, and draws especially on the results of surveys and activities carried out by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). The publication contains information on a variety of subjects in the field of education statistics, including the number of schools and colleges, teachers, enrollments, and graduates, in addition to educational attainment, finances, federal funds for education, employment and income of graduates, libraries, and international education. Supplemental information on population trends, attitudes on education comparisons, education characteristics of the labor force, government finances, and economic trends provides background for evaluating education data. Although the Digest contains important information on federal education funding, more detailed information on federal activities is available from federal education program offices. For example, the Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs supports the National Clearinghouse on Bilingual Education, which compiles information on students and teachers involved in bilingual education.

The *Digest* is divided into seven chapters: "All Levels of Education," "Elementary and Secondary Education," "Postsecondary Education," "Federal Programs for Education and Related Activities," "Outcomes of Education," "International Comparisons of

Education," and "Learning Resources and Technology." To qualify for inclusion, material must be nationwide in scope and of current interest and value. The introduction includes a brief overview of current trends in American education, which supplements the tabular materials in chapters 1 through 7. Information on the structure of the statistical tables is contained in the "Guide to Tabular Presentation." The "Guide to Sources" provides a brief synopsis of the surveys used to generate the tabulations for the *Digest*. Also, a "Definitions" section is included to help readers understand terms.

In addition to updating many of the statistics that have appeared in previous years, this edition contains a significant amount of new material, including:

- Percent of students in grades 4, 8, and 12 at various geography proficiency levels in 1994, table 115;
- Sources of funding for state education agencies, table 158;
- Staff and student/staff ratios in institutions of higher education, by type and control of institution and state, table 219;
- Percent of public schools and school classrooms with Internet access, table 411.

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November 1996

# **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

Many people have contributed in one way or another to the development of the *Digest*. Thomas D. Snyder was responsible for the overall development and preparation of this *Digest* which was prepared under the general direction of Jeanne E. Griffith.

Charlene M. Hoffman provided technical assistance in all phases of its preparation and was responsible for Chapter 4, "Federal Programs for Education and Related Activities," and for tables on degrees conferred. Claire Geddes developed the text for chapter introductions and was responsible for materials dealing with higher education enrollment, finance. and faculty characteristics. William Sonnenberg provided statistical computing consultation on all phases of the report. Celestine Davis provided statistical assistance on materials dealing with educational attainment and student assessment. Debra Gerald and William Hussar prepared projections of school enrollment and finance statistics.

A number of individuals outside the Center also expended large amounts of time and effort on the *Digest*. Sherrie Aitken, Carla Claycomb, Peter Eisenberg, John Powell, William Scarbrough, Linda Shafer, and Patricia Thomson of CSR, Inc., provided research and statistical assistance. Robert Craig and Michelle Brown of Pinkerton Computer Consultants,

Inc., provided computer support. In the Office of Media and Information Services, Robert LeGrand and Simone Miranda provided editorial assistance and Phil Carr designed the cover. Jerry Fairbanks of the U.S. Government Printing Office managed the typesetting.

This year's edition of the Digest has received extensive reviews by individuals within and outside the Department of Education. We wish to thank them for their time and expert advice. In the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI), W. Vance Grant, Mary Frase, and Shelley Burns reviewed the entire manuscript. Rosemary Clark (U.S. Bureau of the Census) also reviewed the entire document. OERI staff who reviewed portions of the manuscript were: Susan Ahmed, Sam Barbett, Jonaki Bose, Patricia Q. Brown, Susan Broyles, Adrienne Chute, Mike Cohen, Rosa Fernandez, Debra Gerald, Arnold Goldstein, Steven Gorman, Kerry Gruber, Frank Johnson, Austin Lin, Marilyn McMillen, Frank Morgan, Jeffrey Owings, John Sietsema, Shi-Chang Wu, and Linda Zimbler. Agency reviews were conducted by the Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs and the Planning and Evaluation Service.

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# INTRODUCTION

In the fall of 1996, about 66.1 million persons were enrolled in American schools and colleges (table 1). About 4.0 million were employed as elementary and secondary school teachers and as college faculty. Other professional, administrative, and support staff of educational institutions numbered 4.4 million. Thus about 74 million people were involved, directly or indirectly, in providing or receiving formal education. In a nation with a population of about 265 million, more than 1 out of every 4 persons participated in formal education.

#### **Elementary/Secondary Enrollment**

Since the enrollment rates of kindergarten and elementary school age children have not changed in many years, increases in elementary school enrollment have been driven by increases in the number of young people. Enrollment in public elementary and secondary schools rose 16 percent between 1985 and 1996. The fastest growth occurred in the elementary grades, where enrollment rose 21 percent over the same period, from 27.0 million to a record high of 32.8 million in 1996 (table 2). Secondary enrollments declined 8 percent from 1985 to 1990, but then rose by 15 percent from 1990 to 1996, for a net increase of 5 percent.

Private school enrollment grew more slowly than public school enrollment over this period, rising 4 percent, from 5.6 million in 1985 to 5.8 million in 1996. As a result, the percentage of students enrolled in private schools declined from 12 percent in 1985 to 11 percent in 1996.

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) forecasts record levels of enrollment during the late 1990s. It is anticipated that by the year 1997, public school enrollments will surpass the previous high set in 1971 and will continue to climb into the next century. Public elementary school enrollment is expected to reach 33.2 million in 1997 and 33.9 million in 2000 (table 3). Between fall 1996 and fall 2000, public elementary enrollment is projected to grow by 3 percent, while public secondary school enrollment is expected to rise by 6 percent.

# **Higher Education**

College enrollment rose to a record level of 14.5 million in fall 1992 and is expected to return to nearly that level in 1996, after falling slightly between 1993

and 1995 (table 3). Despite decreases in the traditional college-age population during the 1980s and early 1990s, total enrollment has remained relatively high because of the increased participation of older women students and a high rate of college attendance for recent high school graduates (tables 171 and 180). The number of part-time students has generally increased at a faster rate than full-time students (table 169).

#### **Teachers**

An estimated 3.1 million elementary and secondary school teachers will be engaged in classroom instruction in the fall of 1996 (table 4). This number has risen in recent years, up about 18 percent since 1986. The number of public school teachers in 1996 will be about 2.7 million and the number in private schools will be about 0.4 million. About 1.9 million teachers are expected to teach in elementary schools, while about 1.2 million will teach at the secondary level (table 4).

The number of public school teachers has risen at a slightly faster rate than the number of students over the past 10 years, resulting in a small decrease in the pupil/teacher ratio. The lower pupil/teacher ratio reflects the trend toward more specialized education programs. In the fall of 1996, there were 17.4 public school pupils per teacher compared with 17.7 public school pupils per teacher 10 years earlier. During the same time period, the pupil/teacher ratio in private schools fell from 15.7 to 15.1 (table 63). Despite the historical trend towards lower pupil/teacher ratios, the fluctuations since 1990 suggest stability or an increase in the pupil/teacher ratio.

The salaries of public school teachers, which lost purchasing power to inflation during the 1970s, rose faster than the inflation rate in the 1980s. The rising salaries reflect an interest by state and local education agencies in boosting teacher salary schedules and, to some extent, an increase in teachers' experience and education levels (tables 68 and 76). The value of teachers' salaries, after adjustment for inflation, rose about 6 percent between 1985–86 and 1995–96. Virtually all of this increase occurred during the mid 1980s. Since 1990–91, the average salary for teachers actually fell slightly after adjusting for inflation. The average salary for teachers in 1995–96 was \$37,846 (table 76).

Public perception about problems facing the local public schools has shifted in the past several years. Between 1986 and 1990, an increasing number of people believed that drug use was a major problem, but the proportion of people with this opinion dropped to 7 percent in 1995. The most frequently cited problem in 1995 was lack of discipline (15 percent). Fighting, gangs, and violence was cited by 9 percent of the population. The lack of financial support was cited as a major problem by 11 percent of the public (table 22).

#### **Faculty and Staff**

During the fall of 1992, there were 905,000 instructional faculty and staff members teaching in higher education institutions. Making up this figure were 528,000 full-time, and 377,000 part-time instructors who varied in number of hours and students taught. Full-time instructors generally taught more hours and more students, with 61 percent teaching eight or more hours per week, and two-thirds teaching 50 or more students. About 30 percent of part-time instructors taught eight or more hours per week, and 30 percent taught 50 or more students (tables 223 and 224).

Another defining feature of college faculty is that it is disproportionately composed of white males. For full-time faculty, the percentage of white males is 58 percent, and it is slightly less than half, at 49 percent, for part-time faculty (table 227).

#### **Student Performance**

Student achievement has improved in many areas, especially for minority children in mathematics and science. Improvements for all students during the 1980 to 1992 period were more consistent in the areas of mathematics and science than in reading.

#### Reading

Overall, the reading achievement scores for the country's 9-, 13- and 17-year-old students are mixed. Many of the advancements in performance that had been made in earlier years among black students, as well as among 9-year-olds and 17-year-olds from disadvantaged urban communities, have not continued or have reversed. For example, while 9-year-olds in the bottom quartile of the distribution were as proficient in 1992 as those in 1971, their performance has not returned to the higher level that was obtained in 1980. Those in the 75th percentile showed no difference from the first assessment. For 13-yearolds, overall gains were seen only for students in the top and middle of the distribution, while those in the low end failed to maintain gains they had made between 1971 and 1988. At age 17, middle and lower end students had proficiencies higher in 1992 than in 1971. The average performance for the top performing students returned to the 1971 level, reflecting an increase since 1980 (tables 105 and 106).

#### Mathematics

Results from assessments of mathematics proficiency indicate that students have made some improvements in their skill with basic computations. However, the performance of older students on advanced mathematical operations has shown little change. The proportion of 9-year-olds who showed beginning skills and understanding rose from 70 percent in 1978 to 81 percent in 1992. The proportion of 9-year-olds demonstrating skill with numerical operations and beginning problem solving rose from 20 percent to 28 percent during the same time period (table 117).

At ages 9 and 13, significant improvement was observed between 1978 and 1992. For 17-year-old students, performance did not change between 1978 and 1982, but an upturn occurred during the following decade. For all ages, there were significant increases in average proficiency between 1982 and 1992. Sizable increases also were registered by minority students, with increases among black and Hispanics at all three age groups.

A 1992 voluntary assessment of the states found that mathematics proficiency varied widely among eighth-graders in the 44 jurisdictions (41 states, 2 territories, and the District of Columbia) that participated in the program (table 118). In 1992, student performance was significantly better than in 1990 in 17 of the jurisdictions participating in both assessments. No state experienced a significant decline in achievement.

#### Science

Improvements also were registered in science proficiency between 1977 and 1992. The proportion of 9-year-olds who understood simple scientific principles rose from 68 percent in 1977 to 78 percent in 1992. Also, the proportion of 9-year-olds who were able to apply basic scientific information rose. The percentage of 13-year-olds demonstrating the ability to apply basic scientific information rose from 49 to 61 percent between 1977 and 1992, but no improvement was registered at the higher levels of achievement. No significant changes occurred in the overall achievement of 17-year-olds between 1977 and 1992 with the exception of the ability to analyze scientific procedures and data. For this skill, the percentage of 17-year-old students who demonstrated success increased significantly. Black and Hispanic students at all three ages performed significantly better in 1992 than in 1977 (tables 122 and 123).

#### International Comparisons

On an international assessment of reading literacy, U.S. students scored in the top performing group at ages 9 and 14 (tables 401 and 402). However, in mathematics and science the results of international comparisons are less encouraging. Recent international assessments of mathematics and science have highlighted the relatively low level of achievement of U.S. students, particularly older students, compared with their peers in other countries (tables 393 to 400). In a 1991 science assessment that was administered to nationally representative groups of 9year-olds in 10 different countries, U.S. students scored lower than Korean students but about the same as students from Taiwan, Canada, Hungary, Spain, and the former Soviet Union. In a mathematics assessment, U.S. 9-year-olds had averages that were below 5 of the 9 other countries (tables 393 and 394). The U.S. 13-year-olds placed in the middle group of countries with nationally representative science achievement data (table 399). In the mathematics assessment of 13-year-olds, the U.S. students were higher than only 1 of 14 countries (Jordan) and about the same as Slovenia and Spain. The remaining 11 countries all had average test scores that were significantly higher than the U.S. (table 396).

### **Graduates and Degrees**

The number of high school graduates in 1994–95 totaled about 2.6 million. Approximately 2.3 million graduated from public schools and less than 0.3 million graduated from private schools. The number of high school graduates has declined from its peak in 1976–77 when 3.2 million people earned their diplomas. The dropout rate declined over this period, from 14 percent of all 16- to 24-year-olds in 1977 to 12 percent in 1995 (table 101).

The number of degrees conferred by institutions of higher education is estimated to have been at an all-time high during the 1994–95 school year: 530,000 associate degrees; 1,192,000 bachelor's degrees; 405,000 master's degrees; 77,000 first-professional degrees; and 43,000 doctor's degrees (table 239).

The Bureau of the Census has collected annual statistics on the educational attainment of the population in terms of years of school completed. These data indicate that, between 1980 and 1995, the proportion of the adult population 25 years of age and over with 4 years of high school or more rose from

69 percent to 82 percent and the proportion of adults with at least 4 years of college increased from 17 percent to 23 percent. In contrast, the proportion of young adults (25- to 29-year-olds) completing high school remained virtually unchanged, and the proportion completing college rose only slightly (table 8).

#### **Expenditures**

Expenditures for public and private education, from preprimary through graduate school, are estimated at \$530 billion for 1995–96. The expenditures of elementary and secondary schools are expected to total about \$318 billion for 1995–96, while those for institutions of higher education will be about \$211 billion. Viewed in another context, the total expenditures for education are expected to amount to about 7.3 percent of the gross domestic product in 1995–96, about the same percentage as in the recent past (table 30).

## **Summary**

The statistical highlights in this section of the report provide a quantitative description of the current American education scene. Clearly, from the large number of participants, the number of years that people spend in school, and the large sums expended by educational institutions, it is evident that the American people have a high regard for education. Assessment data indicate that there have been improvements in mathematics and science performance between 1982 and 1992. A higher proportion of high school graduates are going on to college. Yet, wide variations in student proficiency from state to state and mediocre scores of American students in international assessments pose challenges.

NOTE: Readers should be aware of the limitations of statistics. These limitations vary with the exact nature of a particular survey. For example, estimates based on a sample of institutions will differ somewhat from the figures that would have been obtained if a complete census had been taken using the same survey procedures. Although some of the surveys conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics are complete, census-type surveys, all surveys are subject to design, reporting, and processing errors and errors due to nonresponse. More information on survey methodologies can be found in the "Guide to Sources" in the appendix. Price indexes for inflation adjustments can be found in table 37.